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SUBJECT: JAPANESE MORNING PRESS HIGHLIGHTS 11/01/06

Index:

TODAY'S FEATURES

- 1) Top headlines
- 2) Editorials
- 3) Prime Minister's daily schedule

North Korea problem:

- 4) North Korea promises to return to six-party talks unconditionally
- 5) Japan fears Pyongyang's decision to return to six-party talks may be a tactic to stall for time
- 6) Cannot be optimistic just because North Korea has agreed to rejoin the six-party talks
- 7) Japan worried that Pyongyang may try to add conditions when it returns to six-way talks
- 8) Experts on North Korea do not really expect much progress in 6-party talks
- 9) Japan, US will keep their sanctions against North Korea for the time being

Nuclear issue:

- 10) Finland's parliamentary speaker discusses nuclear controversy in Japan with House Speaker Yohei Kono
- 11) Minshuto (Democratic Party of Japan) plans to pledge in upper-house campaign goal of scrapping all nuclear weapons

Defense and security issues:

- 12) Futenma relocation issue dominating fierce gubernatorial battle

in Okinawa

13) Minshuto torn between party members who may vote for bill raising JDA to ministry and need to reject bill in order to support Okinawa candidate

14) MSDF stretched thin: Need to supply fuel in Indian Ocean and prepare ships for ship inspections of North Korea cargo in waters close to Japan

15) Prime Minister Abe in CNN interview says Article 9 of Constitution does not match the times

16) Date for next summer's Upper House election may be either July 15 or 22

Articles:

1) TOP HEADLINES

Asahi:

Six-party talks to resume as early as this month

Mainichi & Yomiuri:

North Korea to return to six-party talks

Nihon Keizai, Tokyo Shimbun & Akahata:

Six-party talks to resume soon; US, China, North Korea agree

Sankei:

US, China, North Korea agree to restart six-party talks; No prospect for North Korea's abandonment of nuclear ambitions

2) EDITORIALS

Asahi:

TOKYO 00006316 002 OF 012

(1) Cell phone number portability fiasco: Mr. Son, pull yourself together

(2) Quagmire of Iraq war: Don't leave Maliki government in the lurch

Mainichi:

(1) Resumption of six-party talks: Unacceptable for North Korea to possess nuclear weapons

(2) Wakayama bid-rigging scandal: Governor must shed light on the scandal

Yomiuri:

(1) Restart of six-party talks: North Korea's possession of nuclear weapons must not be allowed

(2) Nonlife insurance firms' failure to pay insurance amounts: Can insurers rid themselves of tendency of making light of the policy holders?

Nihon Keizai:

(1) North Korea's return to six-party talks is effect of sanctions

(2) Interest rate should be normalized steadily

Sankei:

(1) UN resolution criticizing North Korea: Tighten the noose around Ozawa over abduction issue

(2) Safety in products: Let's eliminate accidents with three-party cooperation

Tokyo Shimbun:

(1) Basic Education Law: Need for debate on the actual school situation before revising the law

(2) BOJ report: The economy is not so strong

Akahata:

A bill revising the Basic Education Law should be scrapped through thorough deliberations

3) Prime Minister's Official Residence (Kantei)

Prime Minister's schedule, October 31

08:51

Attended a Security Council of Japan meeting, followed by a cabinet meeting. Administrative Reform Minister Sata and Economy, Trade and Industry Minister Amari stayed on.

10:15

Met at Kantei with advisor Nemoto.

11:10

Met Ambassador to China Miyamoto and MOFA Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau chief Sasae. Afterward, gave an interview to US CNN.

13:26

Met LDP Secretary General Nakagawa.

14:38

Gave an interview to Britain's Financial Times. Afterward, met Lower House member Tokuichiro Tamazawa.

TOKYO 00006316 003 OF 012

16:13

Met President Nguema of Republic of Equatorial Guinea.

17:05

Met Senior Vice Foreign Minister Asano. Afterward attended a Gender Equality Council meeting.

19:01

Met Yomiuri Shimbun Group Chairman Tsuneo Watanabe and Nippon Television Chairman Seiichiro Ujiie at the Hotel Seiyo Ginza.

21:19

Returned to his private residence in Tomigaya.

4) North Korea to unconditionally rejoin six-party talks possibly this month

YOMIURI (Top Play) (Excerpts)  
November 1, 2006

Hiroyuki Sugiyama, Beijing

North Korea agreed to soon rejoin the six-party talks during unofficial three-party talks held in Beijing among the senior envoys from the United States, China and North Korea on Oct. 31, according to an announcement by the Chinese Foreign Ministry the same day. The six-party talks have not been held since last November. If the talks resume, the crisis of another nuclear test by North Korea will be put off for the time being. The next round of six-party talks are expected to take place in November at the earliest. With conflicting views still left unresolved between the US and North Korea, however, stormy negotiations are expected.

Since North Korea conducted a nuclear test on Oct. 9, the international community has called on that nation to unconditionally return to the six-party talks while implementing sanctions based on a resolution adopted by the United Nations Security Council. Following the agreement reached yesterday, the countries concerned will engage in a tactful game with an eye to the next round of talks. The US negotiator, Assistant Secretary of State (for East Asia and Pacific affairs) Christopher Hill, told reporters, "North Korea did not attach any conditions for rejoining the six-party talks," adding, "The six-party negotiations could resume as early as November or December." He also indicated his view that the North would not go ahead with a second nuclear test for the time being, saying, "An additional nuclear test is contradictory to the purport of our meeting today."

North Korea has cited a removal of the US financial sanctions as a condition for its return to the six-party talks. Hill said that the US would set up a new working group after the talks are resumed. He also said that the next round would deal substantially with an

agreement reached at the last session of six-part talks in September of last year. He then stressed that the US and China would not recognize North Korea as a nuclear power.

5) Japan concerned about N. Korea's possible exploitation of six-party talks to "buy time"

ASAHI (Page 2) (Full)  
November 1, 2006

TOKYO 00006316 004 OF 012

The Japanese government, which has called for the resumption of the six-party talks, officially welcomes the move for the six-party talks to be restarted. But many are highly skeptical about whether North Korea will move to abandon its nuclear programs, because Pyongyang has repeatedly disappointed Tokyo in the past. A Foreign Ministry official, in fact, expressed concern: "The resumed talks may be simply exploited as a tool for that country to buy time."

"The United States and China led the move this time," the official said. It was a little past noon yesterday when Japan was informed that US Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill arrived in Beijing and began undertaking coordination for the resumption of the six-party talks. Around that time, Prime Minister Abe, too, was informed of this news, and soon he received a notification that there would be an announcement shortly that an agreement has been reached to resume the talks at an early date." Another Foreign Ministry official made this comment: "It's part of the campaign strategy for the midterm elections in the US. It's a surprise."

A senior Foreign Ministry official said of when the six-party talks will be resumed: "Once the agreement has been reached, there's no reason to delay the talks. They may reopen ahead of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum (slated for mid-November)."

Yet, an aide to the prime minister was wary of North Korea's next move, noting: "It's only natural for North Korea to return to the six-party talks. We can't predict what attitude it will assume in the talks." "Japan will see how the North behaves while continuing own sanctions as well as other sanctions set under the United Nations Security Council," this aide added.

Japan's position is that it cannot easily end the ongoing sanctions, as a senior Foreign Ministry official stated, "We must ascertain whether North Korea has agreed to immediately put a halt to nuclear testing and abandon its nuclear programs and nuclear weapons."

6) Difficult road still ahead for settlement of North Korea's nuclear issue

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 3) (Slightly abridged)  
November 1, 2006

A rocky path still lies ahead for a settlement of North Korea's nuclear issue. North Korea stressed in a statement issued by its Foreign Ministry, "Our nation is a nuclear power that is always responsible." The North, on the premise of possessing nuclear weapons, might begin to press other participants in the six-party talks for "arms reductions" in exchange for rejoining the forum.

North Korea is likely to be at odds with Japan and the United States, which regard as the starting point the joint statement issued at the last session of the six-party talks in September 2005, in which North Korea promised to scrap all its nuclear programs.

An expert on North Korea says that the process has been one of "agreement and violation" since the first nuclear crisis in 1993-94. Given this, the dominant view is that optimism may not be warranted only with the North's return to the talks.

Many observers say that the Kim Jong Il regime is extremely eager to have nuclear weapons. In addition, North Korea always resorts to

TOKYO 00006316 005 OF 012

brinkmanship in a bid to draw out concessions from the other side. Should it see negotiations stalled, North Korea might come up with a new provocative act, such as another nuclear test or additional missile launches.

US Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill also said, "We are a long way from our goals here." Regarding the removal of US financial sanctions, White House Press Secretary Snow said, "We have not held negotiations," and indicated that the US would contact North Korea within the framework of six-party talks in principle.

7) Japan wary of North Korea's possible presentation of conditions for rejoining six-party talks

MAINICHI (Page 3) (Full)  
November 1, 2006

Even while welcoming North Korea's decision to rejoin the six-party talks, the Japanese government is concerned about its return to the talks as a "nuclear power." The government intends to keep calling on the North to completely scrap its nuclear development program while continuing economic sanctions on that nation. However, with a change in the atmosphere in the international community, which has been so far unified with the stance of applying pressure on the North in accordance with a resolution on sanctions by the United Nations Security Council, Japan finds it difficult to make its own response.

The agreement was struck in a day of three-party talks between the United States, China, and North Korea. According to several informed sources, the Japanese government had been informed of the talks by the US and China a few days in advance.

In an interview with CNN yesterday morning, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said, "North Korea should return to the six-party talks unconditionally." The US and China explained to Japan after the three-party talks, "North Korea agreed to unconditionally rejoin the talks." In response, a government source commented: "The North said it would return the talks, although the US has not promised to drop its financial sanctions. This might mean that the North has retracted its assertion."

The government source, though, added, "North Korea might come up with (some conditions) in the next round of six-party talks." The Japanese government has urged the North in Japan-US-South Korea foreign ministerial meetings and on other occasions to take specific action toward scrapping its nuclear programs. But the agreement reached between the US, China, and North Korea reportedly does not include such an element. A senior Foreign Ministry official grumbled, "It is just that the party that had refused to attend the talks for its selfish reasons has decided to return to the talks, and we cannot rejoice exuberantly."

There is concern in the government that the agreement in the three-party talks might contribute to realizing dialogue between the US and North Korea. Although the US now takes a tough stance toward the North, like Japan, if the US makes a policy switch, the nation might find it difficult to continue its "pressure" policy.

8) Bleak expectations by experts for progress in six-party talks

MAINICHI (Page 2) (Excerpts)

TOKYO 00006316 006 OF 012

November 1, 2006

Kan Kimura, professor of Korean studies at Kobe University: Idea of establishing a working group is America's "empty promise"

Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill made this suggestion about financial sanctions: "We are ready to set up a working group." Lying behind the suggestion is apparently Washington's intention of putting the matter in China's hands since America's North Korea policy is stuck in a rut. The idea of a working group is not something to give assurance, namely, an "empty promise," which has

no binding force. The United States has not stated it will lift financial sanctions.

For the United States, it is a nightmare to see North Korea raising the capability of its nuclear arsenal by repeated nuclear testing, but it has no intention of expanding sanctions to use military force. The US essentially has no hand to play.

Given that China's Hu Jintao government, which has begun shifting to a conciliatory policy toward the US and Japan, is stable at home, the US perhaps wanted to avoid China losing face. America's real intention about the working group would be to see "how well China can do," while also allowing North Korea to save face.

Noriyuki Suzuki, director of Radiopress Inc.: China achieves diplomatic results, but the US, North Korea are unchanged

China's diplomatic efforts have been noticeable. It has even declared its own tough economic measures against North Korea. State Councilor Tang Jiaxuan flew to Pyongyang where he met with General Secretary Kim Jong Il. Tang also met with Secretary of State

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Condoleezza Rice. China has also actively worked on the US. The decision by North Korea to return to the six-party talks, which will be resumed shortly, will be given high marks. It serves to relax tensions for the time being.

Yet, the attitudes of the US and North Korea are unchanged. I wonder if the two countries will directly negotiate with each other at the six-party talks on such matters as financial sanctions. North Korea has insisted that its nuclear possession is "a deterrent against the US." North Korea appears unlikely to abandon its nuclear programs unless the survival of its regime is ensured by, for instance, a nonaggression pact with the US. On the other hand, it is unthinkable that the US will accept the North's possession of such weapons, so we should not expect the six-party talks to make progress.

9) Japan, US to continue sanctions against N. Korea

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 2) (Excerpts)  
November 1, 2006

The government welcomes the agreement just reached among the United States, China, and North Korea to resume the six-party talks, but it remains wary of North Korea's move. Japan will continue own sanctions against the North, because Pyongyang has yet to take concrete action to abandon its nuclear arsenal. Also, Japan, in cooperation with the United States, firmly maintains its stance of implementing the sanctions under the United Nations resolution. In the resumed six-party talks, Japan intends to strongly urge the North to abandon its nuclear programs unconditionally.

TOKYO 00006316 007 OF 012

Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuhisa Shiozaki late yesterday released a statement: "We welcome the move for the six-party talks to be resumed shortly." On the other hand, many in Japan are concerned that the resumption of the talks may help the North buy time for nuclear development. Japan thinks that the top priority for now is to ascertain whether North Korea has the will to implement the joint statement released in September 2005 by the six-party talks, in which the North pledged to abandon its nuclear ambitions.

10) Finnish Parliament Speaker Lipponen questions Japan's argument on nuclear option

ASAHI (Page 4) (Full)  
November 1, 2006

It has been learned that Speaker of the Finnish Parliament Paavo Lipponen expressed concern during his meeting on Oct. 30 in Tokyo with Japan's House of Representatives Speaker Yohei Kono, noting: "I've heard that there is a view calling for debate on a nuclear option for Japan. How we should take such an argument?" Kono was quoted as saying:

"It is unthinkable at present that Japan will possess nuclear weapons, changing its policy. Neither the Japanese people nor the Diet will reach such a consensus."

Lower House Steering Committee Chairman Ichiro Aisawa revealed the exchange to reporters yesterday.

11) Minshuto's manifesto for next year's Upper House election to specify nuclear disarmament, raising questions about nuclear option debate

ASAHI (Page 2) (Full)  
November 1, 2006

The major opposition Minshuto's (Democratic Party of Japan) administrative policy committee, chaired by Hirotaka Akamatsu, urged the party yesterday to add the topic of nuclear disarmament to its basic policy platform that will serve as the foundation for the party's manifesto (campaign pledges) for next year's Upper House election.

In the wake of a nuclear test by North Korea, such lawmakers as Liberal Democratic Party Policy Research Council Chairman Shoichi Nakagawa and Foreign Minister Taro Aso have called for debate on a nuclear option for Japan. Minshuto intends to take a critical view toward such an argument.

Policy Research Committee Chairman Takeaki Matsumoto told reporters yesterday: "The world may be headed for nuclear proliferation instead of nonproliferation. Although our party has been advocating nuclear disarmament from long before, there is a need to specify it (in our basic policy)." Matsumoto stressed his thinking including a party position critical of statements by Nakagawa and others.

The party's manifesto for last year's general election indicated that the nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction, along with a resolution of the North Korean nuclear and missile issues, would clearly be in the best interests of Japan.

12) Okinawa to announce gubernatorial election tomorrow; Clash over

TOKYO 00006316 008 OF 012

Futenma unavoidable; Ruling, opposition camps face dilemma

SANKEI (Page 5) (Abridged)  
November 1, 2006

Okinawa Prefecture will announce its gubernatorial election tomorrow, with the issue of relocating the US Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station in Ginowan City as the biggest point of contention. The election, scheduled for Nov. 19, is expected to be a one-on-one duel between former Okinawa Electric Power Co. Chairman Hirokazu Nakaima, 67, recommended by the ruling coalition of the Liberal Democratic Party and the New Komeito, and Keiko Itokazu, 59, currently seated on the House of Councillors in the Diet and recommended by the opposition camp, including the Democratic Party of Japan (Minshuto), the Japanese Communist Party, and the Social Democratic Party (Shaminto). The ruling and opposition parties have their respective complicated circumstances. However, the outcome of the election will inevitably affect the realignment of US forces in Japan.

The election will focus primarily on Futenma relocation. Both Nakaima and Itokazu are likewise opposed to the government's plan. Itokazu is absolutely against building a new base. However, Nakaima has shown a flexible stance, saying the best option is to relocate the airfield somewhere outside Okinawa Prefecture but its relocation within the prefecture would be unavoidable.

DPJ President Ichiro Ozawa, meeting the press yesterday, admitted to the necessity of sustaining the US military presence. "But," Ozawa added, "I think its present scale might be unnecessary for Japan." He also said, "We recognize that we will have to resolve the current state of Okinawa that depends on US military bases." With this, Ozawa underscored the significance of the opposition camp's joint struggle.

The ruling and opposition camps will now kick off their election campaigns. Meanwhile, the Diet will also deliberate on a government-introduced bill raising the Defense Agency to the status of a ministry. The DPJ is now wavering over what to do about this legislation. Many of the DPJ's lawmakers are in favor of the legislation, and this makes it delicate for the DPJ to form a joint struggle with the JCP and the SDP, which are clearly opposed to the bill. SDP President Mizuho Fukushima called Ozawa yesterday and asked the DPJ to remain cautious about the legislation. JCP Presidium Chairman Kazuo Shii, in his press remarks, urged the DPJ to oppose it.

On the other hand, the LDP is also in a dilemma. Nakaima, outwardly opposing the government's relocation plan, refused cabinet ministers and ruling coalition executives attending a ceremony to kick off his election campaign.

The Nakaima camp is strongly dissatisfied with Okinawa Affairs Minister Sanae Takaichi's remarks during her recent visit to Okinawa. Takaichi visited Okinawa on Oct. 21 and said as follows: "I won't promise we (government) will undertake all the economic development measures for the northern region (of Okinawa's main island) if there's no progress in the issue of Futenma relocation." The LDP has no other choice but to back Nakaima behind the scenes, according to one of the party's executives.

13-1) DPJ to oppose 'Defense Ministry' bill

TOKYO 00006316 009 OF 012

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 2) (Abridged)  
November 1, 2006

The leading opposition Democratic Party of Japan (Minshuto) yesterday began integrating its lawmakers' opinions to oppose a government-introduced package of legislative measures upgrading the Defense Agency to the status of a ministry. The DPJ will give first consideration to its joint struggle with the Social Democratic Party (Shaminto) and other opposition parties toward this month's gubernatorial elections in Fukushima Prefecture and Okinawa Prefecture and next summer's election for the House of Councillors. Some of the DPJ's lawmakers are in favor of raising the Defense Agency to a ministry. The focus is on how to hold down their revolt.

In his press remarks, DPJ President Ichiro Ozawa stressed: "The Defense Agency is tasked with Japan's national defense, and it's not good at all to leave it in a status with no initiative in cabinet meetings." However, Ozawa also noted the Defense Agency's 'descent-from-heaven' post-retirement job-hunting practices and its officials' corruption scandals. "The Defense Agency should first straighten up itself, and if everybody thinks that's okay, it's all right to do so," Ozawa said.

The DPJ has conservative lawmakers who are positive about raising the Defense Agency to the status of a ministry. "If they're prepared to be dismissed from the party, that's all right," one of the DPJ's executives said, adding that the DPJ leadership would punish them if they revolt.

SDP President Mizuho Fukushima called Ozawa yesterday to remind him of her party's opposition to the legislation. "What to do about the bill is a touchstone for our joint struggle from now on," Fukushima said.

13-2) "Defense ministry bill" wracks Minshuto; party torn between rebellious members and pressure from other opposition parties

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Abridged slightly)  
November 1, 2006

The Minshuto (Democratic Party of Japan) leadership is beset with troubles internally and externally in determining the party's stance on a bill amending the Defense Agency Establishment Law to raise the agency to ministry status.



Japanese Communist Party Executive Committee Chairman Kazuo Shii said in a press conference on Oct. 30: "Minshuto should strongly oppose (the bill)." In her telephone conversation with Minshuto President Ichiro Ozawa on Oct. 31, Social Democratic Party (SDP) head Mizuho Fukushima also applied pressure on the largest opposition party, saying, "Even if we cannot kill the bill, we must block its enactment."

In theory, any party should be able to determine its response to a bill free from pressure from other parties. But this time around, the rule does not apply to Minshuto, as it has jointly fielded a candidate with other opposition parties for the Nov. 19 Okinawa gubernatorial race. Ozawa is aware that if Minshuto supports the bill, solidarity among the opposition parties might collapse.

Meanwhile, the Minshuto leadership is on alert that in a vote, some

TOKYO 00006316 010 OF 012

members might rebel against the party's ultimate decision on the bill. The exposure of discord in Minshuto would raise questions about its ability to govern.

"Once our party decides to vote against the bill, I will abstain from the vote," a conservative mid-level member said. There are many Minshuto lawmakers who are supportive of the bill. But if the party decides to endorse the bill, members supportive of the current Constitution might revolt against it.

14) Concerns voiced about nearby maritime defense; MSDF walking tightrope

SANKEI (Page 5) (Abridged)  
November 1, 2006

In response to the Diet's approval of a one-year extension of the Antiterrorism Special Measures Law, the government decided in a cabinet meeting yesterday to adopt a masterplan that extends the Maritime Self-Defense Force's activities in the Indian Ocean for a half year up until May 1 next year. The MSDF will continue to task a supply ship and a destroyer with refueling US, British, and other foreign naval vessels at sea. The MSDF has been working in the Indian Ocean for nearly five years. However, there are also concerns about Japan's nearby maritime defenses with the MSDF's protracted activities in the Indian Ocean.

Since December 2001, soon after the terrorist attacks on the United States, the MSDF has been refueling US, British, and other foreign naval vessels conducting naval blockades for their antiterror mop-up operations in Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, North Korea carried out a nuclear test. In Diet deliberations over the law's extension, an opposition party lawmaker criticized the government for its decision to extend the MSDF's deployment, saying, "I wonder if it's all right for them to be out with faraway friends when a fire is about to break out nearby."

In fact, the MSDF has only five supply ships, with one of them on stage in the India Ocean at all times. As it stands, if the MSDF actually conducts cargo inspections and backs up US forces in the Sea of Japan or in the East China Sea, the MSDF may have trouble continuing its refueling services. The MSDF is also facing difficulty in lining up destroyers for operations.

"If we find ourselves in a fix, we would then have to modify the masterplan (for the MSDF's deployment to the Indian Ocean," Defense Agency Director General Fumio Kyuma said, adding, "We must consider Japan's national defense first." There is still no telling when the antiterror operations will end. The MSDF will likely be compelled to walk a tightrope in its fleet deployment for the time being.

15) Abe: I will aim for constitutional amendment during my tenure; Article 9 does not fit the times

YOMIURI (Page 1) (Full)  
November 1, 2006

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe gave separate interviews yesterday to America's CNN Television and Britain's Financial Times at his official residence. The Cabinet Public Affairs Office has quoted Abe as saying in the interview regarding constitutional revision: "The

TOKYO 00006316 011 OF 012

LDP president can serve only two three-year terms. I want to aim for constitutional revision during my term of office." Abe thus indicated that he would aim for constitutional revision in the next six years.

Abe also highlighted the need to revise Article 9, saying: "Article 9 is a typical example for it does not fit the times. It must be revised in terms of the defense of Japan and Japan making international contributions."

After assuming office, Abe delivered a policy speech, in which he only said this about constitutional revision, "I expect the ruling and opposition camps will deepen discussion and come up with a policy direction." Abe has been abstaining from making bold comments on the matter.

About the question of visiting Yasukuni Shrine during his tenure of office, Abe also simply stated to the interviewers:

"I will not say whether or not I will visit the shrine so as not let it escalate into a political or diplomatic issue. "Many past prime ministers visited the shrine to protect freedom, democracy, and human rights and contribute to world peace. (Among the prime ministers who visited the shrine), no one was a militarist."

Abe also clearly denied Japan going nuclear, stating:

"Japan is the only country that suffered from nuclear bombings. Japan has a sense of mission to spearhead the drive to eliminate nuclear weapons from the world. Japan has abandoned the policy option of nuclear armaments."

These were Abe's first interviews with foreign media.

16) Tug-of-war in LDP over setting day for next Upper House election: July 15 or 22?

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Full)  
November 1, 2006

A tug-of-war over setting the day for the next House of Councillors election next summer started yesterday in the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). Setting the date for July 15 -- which falls in the middle of a three-day holiday -- is regarded as more likely, but some members favor July 22 -- after the school summer holiday period begins. Chances are that voter turnout will be low no matter which day is chosen, regarded as better for the LDP. The LDP's maneuvering for party interests can be seen in the move.

In its executive meeting on Oct. 30, the LDP decided to hold a convention on Jan. 17 next year. Since the party usually holds a convention immediately before the regular Diet session, it intends to coordinate for convening the next regular session on Jan. 19.

If the regular session convenes on Jan. 19, it will run for 150 days until June 17. If so, under the Public Office Election Law, the next Upper House election would be conducted on July 15 or 22.

Although some senior LDP members wish to hold the election on July 15, other members say that the dominant view in the LDP Upper House is that the election should be conducted on July 22. The government and ruling coalition will determine the date while considering which

TOKYO 00006316 012 OF 012

date is better for them.

In this connection, Minshuto (Democratic Party of Japan) President

Ichiro Ozawa told reporters yesterday:

"We have no choice but to follow what the cabinet and ruling camp decides because they have the right to make their decision at their convenience. We must make every effort to win the race."

SCHIEFFER